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Polls of faculty opinion and certain institutional organizations show that semester plan is more effective in presenting and learning of subject matter, efficient use of faculty and student time, reducing administrative costs. Quarter plan would help some faculty combine teaching or graduate work with research or extension work, and would permit larger student enrollment.

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IOWA STATE COLLEGE

REPORT OF THE STUDY OF THE SEMESTER VS. THE QUARTER PLAN

1952

The information for this report was obtained from two sources:

I. A poll of faculty opinion.

II. A report from heads of the various organizations of the College which might be affected by the change. These included:

(a) The Business Office
(b) The Library
(c) Director of Housing
(d) Registrar
(e) Dean of The Junior College and Director of Personnel
(f) Employment Bureau
(g) The College Hospital
(h) Information Service
(i) Visual Instruction Service
(j) Physical Plant
(k) Atomic Energy Commission

PART I - POLL OF FACULTY OPINION

Each faculty member received a copy of a list of suggested advantages for each of the two (Quarter and Semester) plans, a questionnaire, and a request that he complete the questionnaire and return it to the Divisional Representative.

Of approximately nine-hundred questionnaires distributed 542 were returned. There were 313 (or 58%) in favor of the semester plan and 200 (or 37%) in favor of the quarter plan. The distribution of opinions by divisions is as follows:

	Number who favor each plan		
	Quarter	Semester	No Choice
Agriculture	62	48	7
Engineering	72	54	4
Home Economics	11	35	8
Science	48	158	7
Veterinary Medicine	7	18	3
Total	200	313	29

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Those who failed to turn in their questionnaires are believed to fall generally into three categories:

(1) Those who would not be affected by the change. Many faculty members who are retired, or approaching retirement, did not return the questionnaire. Many full-time research people and extension specialists felt that they would not be affected. This category also includes those here on a temporary basis or who plan to leave before 1954.

(2) Those who felt that they did not have sufficient experience under the two plans to be qualified to express an opinion.

(3) Those who recognized the advantages of each system and had no strong feelings either way.

Although 58 percent of those expressing opinions are in favor of the semester plan, we do not have a majority of the faculty expressing that opinion. Likewise, whereas a majority of those expressing opinions in the Divisions of Agriculture and Engineering are in favor of the quarter plan, they represent less than 50 percent of the faculty of both divisions.

The Department of Agricultural Engineering was included in the Division of Engineering. There were 14 who turned in the questionnaire from Agricultural Engineering and all favored the quarter plan. The four who turned in questionnaires from Ceramic Engineering were all in favor of the quarter plan. The opinion was fairly well divided in other departments of engineering.

The opinion in favor of the quarter plan was strong in Animal Husbandry, Agronomy and Dairy Industry. The Animal Husbandry Department has the Winter Quarter Herdsmen Program, which they believe to be favored by the quarter plan. They also believe the quarter system is more favorable for laboratory classes in which livestock is used. Many of the Agronomy staff are engaged in field experimental work which takes them away from teaching or attending school during the fall or spring, but permits their being here regularly during the winter quarter. The Dairy Plant Operator's course is particularly favored by the quarter plan; a point which is discussed in the suggested advantages of the quarter plan.

A detailed summary of answers to each question is presented as follows:

Question No. 1. Have you had experience in a college or university under the Semester Plan?

Yes. 430 No. 111 (one left blank)

Of the 542 staff members who answered the questionnaire 79 percent have had experience under both the semester and quarter plans.

Question No. 2. If your answer was yes, was this experience as

(student) (staff) (both)

The results of this question are tabulated according to choice of the two plans, and by divisions.

CHOICE	Number with experience with the semester plan			
	Student	Staff	Both	Neither
Quarter				
Agriculture	19	0	22	21
Engineering	40	5	9	18
Home Economics	4	0	2	4
Science	9	0	29	10
Vet. Medicine	3	1	0	3
Quarter Total	75	6	62	56 (28%)
Semester				
Agriculture	17	0	18	13
Engineering	20	4	24	6
Home Economics	7	1	22	5
Science	49	2	89	18
Vet. Medicine	8	0	6	4
Semester Total	101	7	159	46 (15%)

There was a tendency for those who had experience under both plans to favor the semester plan, particularly if the experience under the semester plan was both as a student and staff memeber. Of those who favored the semester plan, 85 percent had experienced both plans. Only 72 percent of those favoring the quarter plan had experienced both plans. In other words, these data indicate that if all faculty members had experienced both plans, there would have been a higher majority in favor of the semester plan.

Question No. 3. Which plan would be more desirable from the standpoint of the presentation of your subject matter?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	38	38	29
Engineering	46	34	44
Home Economics	9	27	8
Science	29	129	47
Vet. Medicine	7	10	10
Total	129	238	138
Percent	25.6	47.0	27.4

There is a decided difference in favor of the semester plan with respect to presentation of subject matter. This question is of particular significance in evaluating the relative effectiveness of the two plans in achieving our goals in education.

Question No. 4. Which plan would be more effective in aiding the student to achieve permanent learning of your subject?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	20	47	46
Engineering	25	36	61
Home Economics	4	35	8
Science	29	129	47
Vet. Medicine	5	8	12
Total	83	255	174
Percent	16.2	49.8	34.0

The opinion of the faculty members was three to one in favor of the semester plan as an aid to learning of subject matter. The value of the semester plan in this respect was recognized by many of those in Agriculture and Engineering even though they favored the quarter plan for other reasons.

Question No. 5. Which plan would offer the greater opportunity for practical laboratory work in your subject matter area?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	28	35	44
Engineering	31	26	68
Home Economics	5	26	11
Science	9	88	80
Vet. Medicine	6	8	14
Total	79	183	217
Percent	16.5	38.1	45.4

This question was asked because of our emphasis on "Science with Pratice". It is rather surprising to learn that the opinion is in favor of the semester plan.

Question No. 6. Which plan would permit the larger number of students to avail themselves of the opportunity of attending Iowa State College?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	84	6	17
Engineering	62	4	47
Home Economics	16	1	19
Science	75	27	67
Vet. Medicine	8	0	17
Total	245	38	167
Percent	54.5	8.5	37.0

The opinion is about six to one in favor of the quarter plan with respect to its effect on enrollment. It is known throughout the college that farm boys like the quarter plan because they can drop out at the end of the winter quarter. Furthermore, some farm boys attend college only during the winter quarter.

The questions we cannot answer are "would these boys, who like to drop out during the Spring Quarter, stay in school all year under the semester plan?" and "Would they have come here in the first place had we been on the semester plan?"

A winter short course in agriculture on a collegiate level might satisfy the needs of most of these farm boys who cannot get away from the farm during a full academic year. Such a program should be developed if we change to the semester plan.

Question No. 7. Which plan would result in the lower cost to the student?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	10	43	50
Engineering	21	30	65
Home Economics	1	21	16
Science	12	72	76
Vet. Medicine	3	9	12
Total	47	175	219
Percent	10.7	39.6	49.7

Practically 50 percent of those answering this question believed that it would make no difference in cost to the student. On the other hand, of those expecting a difference in cost, there were almost four times as many who believed the semester plan would reduce the costs to the student.

From reports received from the heads of the administrative organizations (contained in Part II of this report) it is apparent that the semester plan would cost less to administer than the quarter plan. The saving, however, would represent a very small percent of the total cost of administering either plan. It is doubtful that the saving would be great enough to reflect in a reduction of tuition costs.

Question No. 8. Which plan would be more economical from the standpoint of time and energy expended by the staff members.

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	15	81	15
Engineering	24	59	37
Home Economics	0	45	4
Science	12	165	27
Vet. Medicine	4	20	1
Total	55	370	84
Percent	10.8	72.7	16.5

The opinion is overwhelmingly in favor of the semester plan from the standpoint of efficient use of the staff member's time.

Question No. 9. Which plan would result in more economical use of student's time and energy?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	27	54	24
Engineering	30	57	32
Home Economics	4	33	9
Science	22	141	33
Vet. Medicine	6	18	3
Total	89	303	101
Percent	18.0	61.5	20.5

A strong majority believes that the semester plan would make more efficient use of the student's time.

Question No. 10. Which plan would be more favorable to our research program?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	45	9	54
Engineering	19	14	71
Home Economics	0	3	17
Science	19	60	70
Vet Medicine	1	6	19
Total	84	92	231
Percent	20.6	22.6	56.8

A majority of those answering Question No. 10 believes that there would be no difference between the quarter and semester plans.

Those in the Agricultural Division believe that if a difference does exist it is in favor of the quarter plan. The reasons given for this opinion is that much of our agricultural research is seasonal, and those engaged in teaching (or graduate work) and research fit both jobs into a quarter plan more satisfactorily.

The research program probably would not be affected by the change. Some inconvenience might be caused certain of the research staff in teaching or attending classes.

Question No. 11. Which plan would be more favorable to our extension program?

DIVISION	Quarter	Semester	No Difference
Agriculture	17	4	71
Engineering	21	3	55
Home Economics	1	1	11
Science	22	14	55
Vet Medicine	2	0	19
Total	63	22	211
Percent	21.3	7.4	71.3

A large majority answering this question believes that the extension program would not be affected by changing to the semester plan. Only 296 out of 542 staff members returning the questionnaire answered this question. Of those who believed the extension program might be affected by either plan, three to one favored the quarter plan. The committee contacted several extension staff members to determine why the quarter plan might be more favorable. A typical answer was provided by Mr. Maurice Soults, Assistant Director of the Agricultural Extension Service.

> "Naturally this does not affect the Extension Service too much, but in one or two areas it does. It would seem to us that it is much more convenient for staff members to do graduate work on a quarter basis than on a semester basis."

PART II

REPORTS FROM HEADS OF ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

The heads of administrative organizations are unanimously in favor of the semester plan. Their chief reasons seem to be that the adoption of the semester plan would result in a reduction in costs and an increase in efficiency throughout the different administrative offices of the College.

SUMMARY

The decision for changing to the semester plan should not be based on savings in administration if the quarter plan is more effective in achieving our educational objectives But this study does not show the quarter plan to be superior to the semester plan.

The opinions obtained from this investigation indicate the following:

The semester plan appears to be more effective in:

(a) Presenting subject matter.
(b) Learning of subject matter.
(c) Efficient use of time of faculty.
(d) Efficient use of time of students.
(e) Reducing costs of administration.

The quarter plan has the following strong points:

(a) Some staff members may combine teaching (or attending graduate school) with research or extension more conveniently.
(b) More students may attend Iowa State College, probably because of the close correspondence of the quarters with busy seasonal-farm work.

Respectfully submitted,

E. A. Benbrook
Gertrude Chittenden
Chalmer J. Roy
Lowell O. Stewart
C. H. Werkman
Louis M. Thompson, Chairman

IOWA STATE COLLEGE

Ames

Office of the
President

September 10, 1952

To the Members of the Faculty:

There is enclosed a copy of the report submitted by the special committee appointed last year to study the relative merits of the Quarter versus the Semester Plan, as it may apply at the Iowa State College. The report is the result of a great deal of study and deliberation and warrants your careful consideration.

A special meeting of the General Faculty has been called for 3:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 7, in Marston Assembly for further consideration of the report, and possible action.

Sincerely yours,

Charles E. Friley

Charles E. Friley
President

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enc

IOWA STATE COLLEGE

AMES, IOWA

June 5, 1952

Charles E. Friley, President
Iowa State College
117 Beardshear Hall

Dear Dr. Friley:

Attached is the report of the committee appointed to study the semester plan.

Analysis of the faculty opinions expressed on the questionnaire indicates:

(a) A hesitation by many to change to the semester plan because of the difficulty involved.

(b) That many staff members who favor the quarter plan recognize the greater educational efficiency of the semester plan as indicated by their answers to questions 3, 4, 8 and 9.

It is our opinion that faculty opinion is strongly in favor of the semester plan and we recommend that the necessary steps be taken to make the change effective September 1954.

Sincerely yours,

LOUIS M THOMPSON

Louis M. Thompson, Chairman
E. A. Benbrook
Gertrude Chittenden
Chalmer J. Roy
Lowell O. Stewart
C. H. Werkman

dlh